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# The Mysticism of William Law

B. HARVEY GEM, M.A.

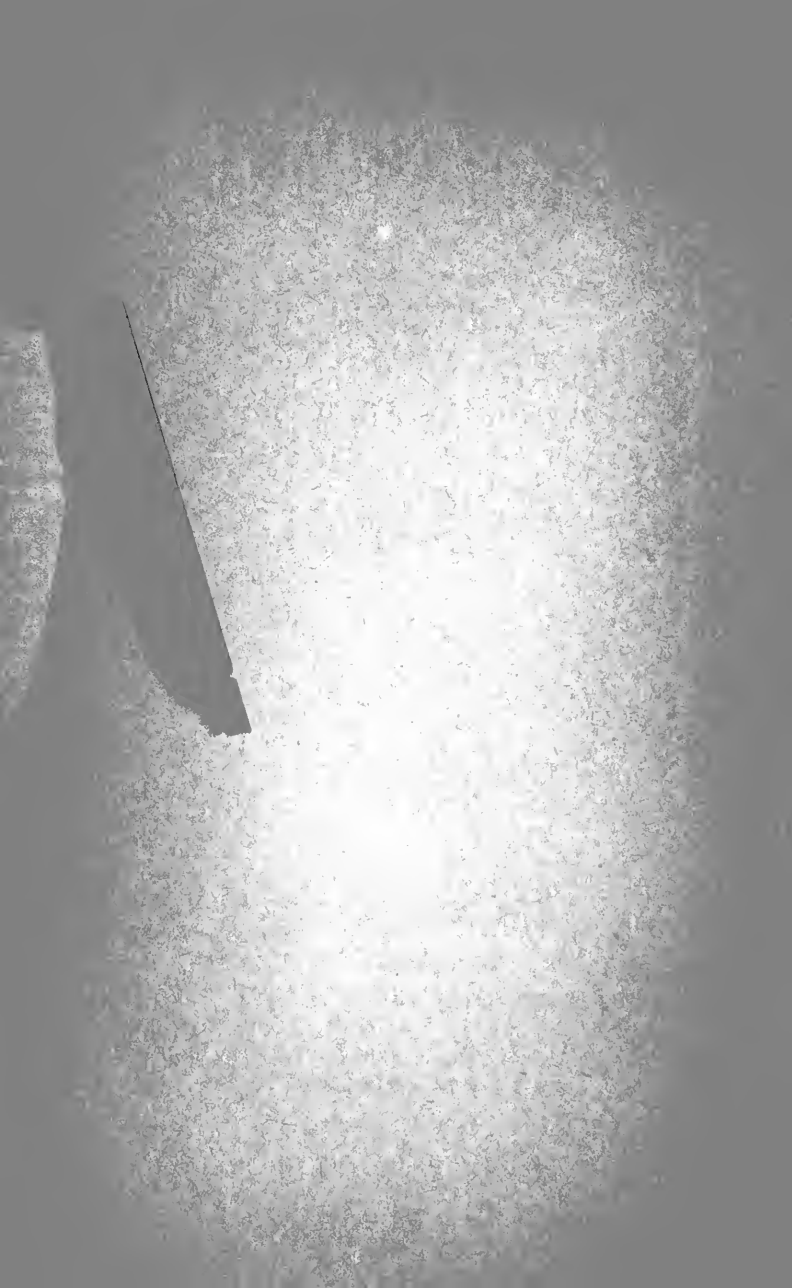
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# THE MYSTICISM OF WILLIAM LAW

A STUDY

BY THE

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

SEVERAL editions of the Spirit of prayer and the Spirit of Love are to be had, and the works of William Law were privately reprinted for Mr. G. Moreton (who gives us his address: Setley, Brockenhurst, New Forest) in 1892, in nine volumes.\* This reprint is made from an edition published by J. Richardson, London, in 1762. Various editions of parts of Law's works have appeared from time to time. *The Serious Call* has been recently reprinted in a cheap form by *Griffith & Farran*, by *Dent*, and also by *Methuen*, this latter volume being preceded by an Introduction by the Rev. Dr. Bigg, of Christ Church, late Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford.

The writer of these pages is fully aware that only a very slight sketch of Mysticism can be attempted in so short a space. His great object has been to express himself with clearness, so that persons who have not previously considered the subject may grasp some of its leading ideas. It will be seen that he has quoted freely from Dean Inge, and Dr. Illingworth, and others, but he has at the same time striven not to be a mere copyist, but to think out the matter for himself.

\* In the later volumes the address given is 42 Burgate Street, Canterbury.

# LEADING DATES OF THE LIFE OF LAW AND OF SOME OF HIS WRITINGS.

Born at Kingscliffe, Northamptonshire	-	-	1686
Sizar at Emmanuel, Cambridge	-	-	1705
B.A.	-	-	1708
Fellow of his College and ordained	-	-	1711
Refuses the oath to George I. and has to resign his Fellowship and his Clerical Work	-	-	1714
Writes the three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor			1717
Writes against the <i>Fable of the Bees</i>	-	-	1723
<i>Christian Perfection</i> , the first of his Practical Treatises	-	-	1726
Resides for some years at Putney with the Gibbons.			
<i>Serious Call</i> published	-	-	1729
His <i>Case for Reason</i>	-	-	about 1732
Law becomes acquainted with the writings of Böhme	-	-	about 1733
Retires to Kingscliffe	-	-	1740
Settled with two ladies there	-	-	about 1744
First part of <i>Spirit of Prayer</i> published	-	-	1749
First part of the <i>Spirit of Love</i> in	-	-	1752
<i>Address to the Clergy</i> , Law's last work	-	-	
He died April 9th, at the age of 75	-	-	1761



PART I.

WILLIAM LAW ON CHRISTIAN PRACTICE



## WILLIAM LAW

### ON CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

WILLIAM LAW was born at Kingscliffe, a village in Northamptonshire, about seven miles from Stamford. His father was the village grocer, a good man, who brought up his family in Christian principles. Law entered as a sizar at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1705. He was elected fellow of his College in 1708, and was ordained in 1711. His strong sense of duty had led him to be a diligent student, and early in life he had drawn up rules for his own conduct, which anticipated much of his future teaching. There are eighteen of these rules, and I will quote a few of them.

“To think nothing great or desirable because the world thinks it so. The greatness of human nature consists in nothing else but in imitating the Divine Nature. That therefore all the greatness of this world that is not in good actions is perfectly beside the point. To forbear from all evil speaking. To think often of the life of Christ, and propose it as a pattern to myself. To spend some time in giving an account of the day, previous to evening prayer.”

He had been a successful man at Cambridge, but his tenure of his fellowship was not to be a long one. The views of the earlier Non-jurors as to the succession of the Crown came to the front again at the death of Queen Anne, and Law argued in favour of them. George I. had only a Parliamentary title. Law refused the oath of allegiance to him, and with that refusal went his position at Cambridge and all his opportunities of public ministry as a clergyman. It was a terrible sacrifice, not merely of his means of living, but of his chances of future usefulness. But he did not hesitate, the claim of conscience was supreme, and he would follow it even to the loss of all else. In a letter to his elder brother he says, "I have sent my mother such news as I am afraid she will be too much concerned at, which is the only trouble for what I have done. My prospect, indeed, is melancholy enough, but had I done what was required of me to avoid it, I should have thought my condition much worse."

Canon Overton adds, "Law's prospects as a Non-juror were dreary enough. He had not even the poor satisfaction of being able to join heart and soul with the opponents of the new *régime*, for he had no mind to meddle with politics. It was a matter of indifference to him personally whether King James or King George were sitting on the throne; he simply obeyed his conscience, and was prepared to take the consequences whatever they might be."

It may be difficult for some of us, who see what a terrible mess of their kingship the Stuarts made, to enter into the mental position of the Non-jurors; but

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Law*, p. 17.

at any rate we can all respect a sacrifice made for conscience, and especially when we notice in the world of the present day how difficult such sacrifices seem.

Law had given up much, but he still had his pen, and in this he found refuge. His famous *Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor* appeared in 1717; they raised him at once to a high rank as a writer of controversial divinity. Bishop Hoadly of Bangor was an extreme Broad Churchman, and Law's *Three Letters* defended the Anglican position. Afterwards, in 1723, appeared his reply to the *Fable of the Bees*. This was a foolish pamphlet by a physician named Mandeville. It cast ridicule on the foundations of morality; attributing all actions that seemed good to pride and self-interest. Law's answer was crushing. It has been highly valued in our own times by so great an authority on morals as Frederick Denison Maurice, and by his friend John Sterling. Maurice re-edited it at the request of Sterling, prefixing an elaborate introduction, and adding at the end the *Fable of the Bees* itself, with Mandeville's notes, so that the reader can judge of the whole controversy for himself. Sterling wrote to Maurice, observing that, in his opinion, the first section of Law's reply is one of the most remarkable philosophical essays he had seen in English. "For myself," says Sterling, "I have never seen in our language the elementary grounds of a rational ideal philosophy, as opposed to empiricism, stated with nearly the same clearness, simplicity, and force."

In 1731 Law published an answer to the arguments of the Deists, which was entitled the *Case of Reason*.

His first devotional book appeared in 1726. It was

called *Christian Perfection*. The present Archbishop of York, quoted it recently in a sermon, and called it a wonderful book ; but most of the same thoughts were afterwards embodied by Law in his *Serious Call*.

About this time began his connection with the Gibbon family ; he became tutor to the Edward Gibbon who was father to the famous historian ; and resided in their spacious house at Putney as the much honoured friend and guide of the family. The sceptical historian speaks of him in the highest terms, as one who believed all he professed and practised all that he believed. When the years at Putney were over, Law retired to his native place, Kingscliffe, to study, to write and to carry out practical works of charity. He was joined there by two ladies, who had for some time been under his spiritual guidance, Miss Hester Gibbon and Mrs. Hutcheson, a widow, whose husband when dying had specially commended her to Law. These ladies had three thousand a year between them, and the greater part was every year expended in charity. They are said, indeed, to have spent all this in charity except £300 a year. Law had previously established a school for the education and clothing of fourteen poor girls with some money given him by a friend. And now, in 1745, Mrs. Hutcheson founded a similar school for boys, whose number she afterwards raised to twenty. Almshouses for ancient maidens or widows were also built. Law desired that his children should be trained to grow up good Christians and good churchmen and churchwomen, and he set down careful directions for their behaviour. As regards the girls, after mentioning various rewards

for knowledge of Scripture and Catechism, we find some quaint directions given for their punishment, which in these very much easier days may not be without interest both to young and old.

Every girl, as soon as she can say the whole Catechism in a ready manner, shall have a shilling given her before them all, with commendation and exhortation to go on in her duty.

Every girl shall have sixpence given her as soon as she can say by heart the morning and evening prayer.

Every girl that shall get by heart the 5th, 6th, 7th, 18th, or 25th chapters of St. Matthew, or the 6th or 7th of St. Luke or the 18th or 19th of St. John ; or the 15th, chapter of 1 Cor. from the 20th verse, shall have for every such chapter a shilling given her, in the presence of all the rest, with commendation and exhortation to love and practise the Word of God. They shall also ever after repeat these chapters, one at a time, once every week, in a plain and distinct manner ; at which time every other girl shall leave off her work, and quietly listen to the chapter that is repeating. At the end of which chapter they shall all say, " Glory be to Thee, O Lord, for this Thy Holy word," and, making a curtsy, everyone shall sit down in their proper seat.

Every girl that gives the lie to any other girl, or to any person, or that calls another a fool, or uses any rude or unmannerly word, shall the morning afterwards, as soon as they are all there, be obliged to kneel down before her mistress, and in the presence of them all say in a plain and distinct manner these words :—" Our Blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, hath said that ' Whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.'

I, therefore, am heartily sorry for the wicked words that I have spoken to my fellow Christian ; I humbly beg pardon of God, and of all you that are here present, hoping and promising, by the help of God, never to offend again in the like manner." Then shall the girl she had abused come and take her from her knees, and kiss her ; and both turning to their mistress, they shall make a curtsy and return to their seats.

Any girl that shall be found to have told a lie, to have cursed or swore, or done any undutiful thing to her parents, or to have stolen anything from any other girl, shall stand chained a whole morning to some particular part of the room by herself, and afterwards, in the presence of them all, shall, upon her knees, repeat these words :

" The Word of God teaches us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I, therefore, a wicked child, humbly confess before God, and all you that are here present, that I have grievously sinned against God, in lying (or cursing, swearing, or stealing, as the case may be). I am heartily sorry for this great sin, and humbly on my knees beg of God to forgive me. I desire you all to pray for me and to forgive me, and I promise by God's grace never to commit the like fault." Then shall the mistress say this prayer : " Almighty God, Who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, who desirest not the death of a sinner but rather that he should turn from his sins and be saved ; we beseech Thee to have mercy upon this child, who hath confessed her sins unto Thee, and grant that both she, and all of us here present, may, by the assistance of Thy



Holy Spirit, be preserved from all sin, strengthened in all goodness, and serve Thee faithfully all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Then shall all the girls rise, and making a curtesy, return to their seats.

Every girl when she walks in the street shall make a curtesy to all masters and mistresses of families, and to all ancient people, whether rich or poor. They shall also make a curtesy when they enter into any house, and at their coming out of it.

It is unfortunate to be obliged to add that the charitable spirit of Law and the good ladies was not always so wisely exercised. They maintained a host of itinerant beggars, and would not believe the rector of the parish when he pointed out the damaging result. In a man of such high ability this weak point may have been one of the unfortunate results of his having shut himself out, as a non-juror, from parochial work, so that he had little experience of the characters and temptations of the casual poor. To give indiscriminately to beggars is, as Archbishop Whately said, to pay them to go about with fictitious tales of distress. The establishment of labour homes has now done much to give a safe opening to charity: and if the Kingscliffe benefactors of others had lived in the present day, we may be sure they would have set us an example of supporting these, which we should not be slow to follow. But in the high aim of daily self-denial exercised in the midst of ample means, we find these three noble lives laid before us, showing us that amid whatever difference of application this principle of renunciation for the Service of Christ is a necessary condition of blessedness for the Christian soul.

Law reached his seventy-fifth year in full vigour both of mind and body. His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. Miss Gibbon, indeed, informs us that he retained the strength and vivacity of a man in the prime of life. His last writing was an address to the clergy which had all the power of his earlier years. It was at Easter that his end came, on the 9th of April, 1761. "After we had heard the afternoon Easter Sunday's sermon," says a friend who was staying with him, "we took a walk through the town of Kingscliffe. He opened a gate into a field and began a discussion on the restoration of all things, and spoke like an angel upon this and other matters, as if he was ready to be carried up to heaven, and in the bosom of the Divine love to be blessed to all eternity." A day or two after, attending the audit of his beloved school, he took a chill, producing severe illness. Miss Gibbon relates that "after taking leave of everybody in the most affecting manner, he expired in Divine raptures." His body was laid under the shadow of the church, where he had never missed a service for many years. It was a fitting time, adds Overton, for his burial, when the glorious and comforting thoughts of Eastertide were being echoed around, and when nature herself was silently uttering the yearly parable of the Resurrection.

The character of Law is full of interest. He was intensely conscientious. The idea of any compromise between one's conscience and one's advantage was abhorrent to him. We have seen that he affords us a conspicuous example of this, when as a young man, a Fellow of his College, and just beginning his clerical career, he sacrificed his opportunities both of livelihood

and work in obedience to an obligation which he imagined to be binding. He did not yield to the too common temptation of sophisticating his conscience. If we once parley with our intuition as to what is *honest for us*, we can sophisticate ourselves into almost anything. And ultimately he had his reward. God honoured the unyielding uprightness of His servant. For he became, through the retirement which seemed the loss of all things, one of the most powerful writers of his age. His voice in church was silenced, but Providence put the pen into his hand instead.

This conscientiousness was closely allied with his reality. He could not see a duty, and let it lie; he must carry it out. A conventional religion, which was supposed to be carried out, but was not, was a position he could never sanction. Hence he wrote as he did, in his two great practical treatises, his *Christian Perfection* and his *Serious Call*, because he longed so earnestly to make men real.

Such qualities as these were consecrated by a deep sense of the presence of God. He saw by the eye of faith, the eye of spiritual vision, Him Who is invisible to mere earthly sense; unseen things became to him the great treasures of life; the possessions which earthly men desire were of no account to him. His soul was always with God, and so he could entirely put aside the wish for any worldly honour or advancement. He could be happy in an obscure village looking after the teaching of a few school children.

Moreover, his character and mind were progressive. In his young days, he had been somewhat supercilious, and had over-valued intellectual ability. This is

indicated in his description of the clergyman named *Ouranius* in the *Serious Call*. Afterwards his pride was cast away, and he became so humble that he never resented a personal affront. His value for spiritual grace, compared with the mental ability of which he had so large a share, became conspicuous in all his writings. Moreover he was progressive. His practical obedience led him to deeper teachings of the Holy Spirit as years passed on. He was able to consider fresh thoughts about religion with the unprejudiced mind of a true student of holy things. So he was able to learn what the Spirit of God had to teach him, and to welcome new aspects of truth. He was a High Churchman, but his breadth of mind enabled him to honour all who were living for God. He could commend alike the holiness of the good Romanist and the good Quaker and believed that they would meet at last in the one Fold of the One Shepherd.

We do not claim for Law that he made no mistakes. There is a saying that he who makes no mistakes makes nothing else. Powerful as his intellect was, yet he fell into many intellectual errors. Such was his idea that the angels lived on this earth before they sinned, and that Adam had a different body before the Fall from what he had after: such were many of the fancies that he derived from Böhme about the natural world, and which he defended with a misplaced pertinacity. Yet on the spiritual side he was not often wrong, and he never gave way to the error of some mystics in undervaluing the ordinances of the visible Church. The gradual growth of Christian character in the soul was all important in his eyes, and he wished it to be

nourished by the prayers and Sacraments of the Church.

It will be well to spend a few moments in considering some of the remarkable opinions given by Law's principal contemporaries on the *Serious Call*. One of the most severe criticisms on it has been that there is very little Gospel in it. The process of Evangelical conversion is not referred to. The agony of the soul under conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, its flight to the atoning Saviour, before Whom its burden is laid down, its listening to His absolving Voice, its sense of new life in union with His life; these are not referred to, or but slightly touched upon. Yet it is a fact that Law and his *Serious Call* had much to do with the Evangelical revival; for he had great influence on Wesley and others.

In his *Serious Call* he was a sort of John the Baptist. And we need not undervalue his work if we remember that the *Serious Call* was never intended as a complete statement of Christian truth—it was a summons to attend, rather than a complete message. Writings of this kind are of value; for the Gospel messages of conversion and pardon and peace, like any other statements of religion, become conventional if repeated without any variation—and those who have heard them again and again without accepting them become hardened. The re-setting, in various forms, of religious truth is necessary to rouse attention to it, and the form in which Law embodied his message was one that aroused wide attention to the claims of Christianity on the heart and life. It will be well to note some of the appreciations expressed.

Wesley, in his early days, lays stress on the awakening effect which Law had produced upon him, and

though he had some serious controversy with him in middle life, yet he expresses himself in his last days as follows: "The *Serious Call* is a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought." He had also set his seal upon its value by making it a text-book for the highest class in his school at Kingswood. Charles Wesley and George Whitefield expressed similar appreciation of it. So with others of the Evangelical saints. The biographer of Henry Venn says "Law's *Serious Call* he read repeatedly, and tried to form his life after that model." Thomas Scott remarks, in his early days, that the reading of it convinced him of great remissness and negligence, and that the duties of secret devotion called for far more of his time and attention than had been hitherto allotted to them. Another, James Stillingfleet, a pious and accomplished man, asserts that we have not in the language a more masterly performance in its way, or a book better calculated to promote a concern about religion, than Law's *Serious Call*. Nor was it only the Methodists and Evangelicals who were deeply touched by Law's book. The verdict of Doctor Johnson is still more interesting. "I became," he says, "a sort of talker against religion, for I did not much think against it, and this lasted till I went to Oxford, when I took up Law's *Serious Call* to a holy life, expecting to find it a dull book as such books generally are. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me, and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest." On another occasion he called it the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language. Gibbon, with whose family

life Law had as we have seen been connected, observes : " Mr. Law's masterwork, the *Serious Call*, is still read as a popular and powerful book of devotion. His precepts are rigid, but they are founded on the Gospel. His satire is sharp, but it is drawn from the knowledge of human life : if he finds a spark of piety in his reader's mind, he will soon kindle it into a flame : and a philosopher must allow that he exposes with equal severity and truth the strange contradiction between the faith and practice of the Christian world."

The author, as he takes his pen in hand, looks round upon the world of his day : and what strikes him pre-eminently is the extraordinary divergence between the worship of Christians on a Sunday and their lives during the week. It appears to him that most of the professing Christians who attend Church regularly are as careless in the week as those who are openly irreligious. The religion of most persons strikes him as being a mere conventional veil, worn in church but thrown off out of church. He asks the reason of this, and finds it in the want of intention, the absence of an all-pervading intention to do what pleases God : every-day, in every hour of the day, in every occupation. Many do not even realise that God desires their whole life and not only the Sunday part of it. He passes on to illustrate these facts by the misuse that has occurred of a common word—the word "devotion." He asks what is the meaning of the word "devotion," and is told that it means "prayer." Not so, says he ; devotion means a life wholly given to God in all its parts, and not only in prayer. In earthly affection and service we speak of the devotion of a nurse to a patient, the

devotion of a wife to a sick husband, the devotion of a son or daughter to an aged parent. But when we come to the things of God we usually mean by devotion only religious exercises, as if by paying a tribute of these to God, we could buy off the necessity of serving Him in all things. So Law goes on to show that devotion in prayer is useless, unless our aim is devotion in everything. If our common life is not a course of humility, self denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affections, we do not live the life of Christians.

He is driven therefore to the conclusion that most nominal Christians have not even the intention to please God in all their actions. The primitive Christians had this intention.

But to have this intention is not only our duty, it is also the happiest and best thing for us, and it is the happiest and best thing in every occupation and business of life.

Further, those who are free from the necessity of labour, and have sufficient means without working, are not thereby intended to have a life of self-indulgence, but should be as good angels in the world, always striving to do the best and highest things that they can find to do.

"A slave," he says, "can only live to God in one particular way, that is by religious patience and submission in his state of slavery. But all ways of holy living, all instances, and all kinds of virtue, lie open to those who are masters of themselves, their time, and their fortune.

Consider yourselves, therefore, as placed in a state in



some degree like that of good angels, to assist, protect, and minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

This duty of being a good angel, he proceeds to illustrate by one of his racy examples. Addressing a lady of good means he says, "Had you, Serena, been obliged by the necessities of life to wash clothes for your maintenance or to wait upon some mistress, it would then be your duty to serve and glorify God by such humility, obedience, and faithfulness as might adorn that state of life. But as God has given you five talents, as He has placed you above the necessities of life, as He has left you in the hands of yourself, in the happy liberty of choosing the most exalted ways of virtue, as He has enriched you with many gifts of fortune, and left you nothing to do but to make the best use of a variety of blessings, to make the most of a short life, to study your own perfection, the honour of God, and the good of your neighbour, so it is now your duty to imitate the greatest servants of God, to enquire how the most eminent saints have lived, to study all the arts and methods of perfection, and to set no bounds to your love and gratitude to the bountiful Author of so many blessings. . . . Keep your soul in the presence of God, and teach it to imitate those guardian angels, which though they attend on human affairs, yet 'always behold the Face of My Father which is in heaven.'"

After enlarging on the opportunities afforded by the possession of independent means, and the danger of spending them on our own indulgence, the writer proceeds to bring forward two sisters both endowed with moderate but independent incomes, and enforces his teaching by picturing their different modes of living.

“ Flavia has been the wonder of all her friends for her excellent management in making so surprising a figure with so moderate a fortune. Several ladies that have twice her income, are not able to be always so genteel and so constant at all places of pleasure and expense. Flavia is very orthodox, she talks warmly against heretics and schismatics, is generally at Church, and often at the Sacrament. She once commended a sermon that was against the pride and vanity of dress, and thought that it was very just against Lucinda, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need to be. If any one asks Flavia to do something in charity, if she likes the person that makes the proposal, or happens to be in a right temper she will toss him half-a-crown or a crown, and tell him if he knew what a long milliner’s bill she had just received he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this, she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity ; she thinks the man preaches well, that it is a very proper subject, but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago when she could ill spare it.”

Miranda, sister to Flavia, offers a great contrast to her, “ She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking or not liking, anything, and that is the will of God. Her fortune is divided between herself and several other poor people, so that she has only her share of relief from it. She regards herself as only one of a certain number of poor people that are relieved out of her fortune. The only difference between them is that she enjoys the blessedness of giving. Every morning sees her early at her prayers ; she rejoices in the beginning

of every day because it begins all her pious rules of holy living and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be as a guardian angel to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers blessing the place where she dwells; God has heard several of her private prayers, before the light is suffered to enter into her sister's room. She is sometimes afraid that she lays out too much money in books, because she cannot forbear buying all practical books of any note, especially such as enter into the heart of religion, and of all human writings the lives of pious persons and eminent saints are her greatest delight.

"Miranda once passed by a house, where the man and his wife were cursing and swearing at one another in a most dreadful manner and three children crying about them; this sight so much affected her compassionate mind that she went the next day and bought the three children; that they might not be ruined by living with such wicked parents. They now live with Miranda, are blessed with her care and prayers, and all the good works which she can do for them. Such is the spirit, and the life of the devout Miranda. Will she not be glorious at last amongst those that have fought the good fight and finished their course with joy?"

We have already seen that Law and his friends acted out these principles in their own expenditure; and I may add a remarkable example from the Church History of the eighteenth century of Abbey and Overton. They tell us that the Thorntons, London merchants residing at Clapham, used to give most freely to the Evangelical clergy who were poor, both for themselves and for charitable purposes. Henry Thornton, while a bachelor

spent six-sevenths of his income in charity, living on the remaining seventh himself. As a married man he gave two-thirds away, and only retained one-third for himself and his family.

In the next chapter, the tenth, Law returns to his favourite thought that none can claim exemption from being the servants of their God ; and to what he said at the beginning of his book, that we must try to bring our whole life into harmony with our prayers and our praises. Of this chapter the following impressive passage may be taken as a summing up—(p. 90): “For the Son of God did not come from above to add one external form of worship to the several ways of life that are in the world, and so to leave people to live as they did before, in such tempers and enjoyments as the fashion and spirit of the world approves. But as He came down from heaven, altogether divine and heavenly in His own nature, so it was to call mankind to a divine and heavenly life ; to the highest change of their whole nature and temper ; to be born again of the Holy Spirit ; to walk in the wisdom and light and love of God ; and be like Him to the utmost of their power ; to renounce all the most plausible ways of the world, whether of greatness, business, or pleasure, to a mortification of all their most agreeable passions, and to live in such wisdom, purity, and holiness, as might fit them to be glorious in the enjoyment of God to all Eternity.”

Passing on, the author hears some one objecting, and saying that such religious habits will be too great a restraint on human life, and giving up this, that, and the other, will make us melancholy. To this he replies

that God only asks us to give up what is bad for us—and by giving up things that would harm us we become capable of the highest form of enjoyment.

So in the next chapter he asks “Must it be tedious and tiresome to live in the continual exercise of charity devotion, and temperance, to act wisely and virtuously, to do good to the utmost of your power, to imitate the divine perfections, and prepare yourself for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome to be delivered from blindness and vanity, from false hopes, and vain fears, to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your Friend, that all must work for your good, that neither life nor death, neither men nor devils can do you any harm; but that all your sufferings and doings that are offered to God are in short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory in the presence of God; must such a state as this be dull and tiresome?”

In the thirteenth chapter he goes on to point out that our eyes and ears want opening, that we may see and hear what a greatness and happiness there is in spiritual things—as our Lord said, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.” Naturally we do not see the glorious things which the Spirit of God is ready to reveal, as St. Paul says they are “spiritually discerned,” and the usual order is “first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual.” 1 Cor. xv. 46. “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.”

When we come to the fourteenth chapter, we enter on considerations about the importance of prayer. In the former half of the book, we might almost be led to

imagine that Law was inclined to undervalue prayer, as compared with active exertion. But that would be a very erroneous conclusion. Law was only anxious to show that devotion meant the giving the whole of ourselves to God, and not part. He now has much to say about the inner life of prayer. He gives it as his opinion that not to rise early for prayer is weakening to the fibre of character, tends to produce an idle, self-indulgent temper, and is contrary to the spirit of mortification and energy which marked the early Christians. Their religion was all life and spirit and joy in God, and so our earliest prayer should be a thanksgiving for a new day.

Self-discipline in early rising for prayer and the maintenance of a lively, zealous, watchful spirit, through the day so as to be ready for our hours of prayer is much recommended. He points out also the value of having some particular corner of our room used for our prayers—so that there may be a spot familiar to us that is consecrated to devotion. “For,” says he, “by having a place thus sacred in your room, it would in some measure resemble a chapel or house of God. This would dispose you to be always in the spirit of religion when you were there, and fill you with wise and holy thoughts when you were by yourself. Your own apartment would raise in your mind such sentiments as you have when you stand near an altar, and you would be afraid of doing anything foolish near that place, which is the place of prayer, and holy intercourse with God.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Bede passed away, with his head resting on a pupil's hands, with his eyes fixed on his wonted place of devotion,” —*Early English Church History*, BRIGHT, p. 338.

Should we use forms of prayer, or pray extempore? This question Law answers with his usual practical common sense. He says, "though I think a form of prayer very necessary and expedient for public worship, yet if any one can find a better way of raising his heart to God in private, than by prepared forms of prayer, I have nothing to object against it," and his conclusion is that for most people a form of prayer will be a help; but that there can be no possible objection to add to the form the spontaneous expression of our needs and feelings to God. So he adds: "At all the stated hours of prayer it will be of great benefit to you to have something fixed and something at liberty in your devotions. You should have some fixed subject which is constantly to be the chief matter of your prayer at that particular time; and yet have liberty to add such other petitions as your condition may then require."

Moreover our prayers should be adapted to changes in our circumstances, and to the inward change of our feelings and needs.

"Mundanus is a man of excellent parts and clear apprehension. He is well advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business. Every part of trade and business that has fallen in his way has had some improvement from him; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing anything well to its greatest height. Mundanus aims at the greatest perfection in everything. The soundness and strength of his mind, and his just way of thinking upon things, makes him intent upon removing all imperfections.

"He can tell you all the defects and errors in all the common methods, whether of trade, building, or im-

proving land, or manufactures. The clearness and strength of understanding, which he is constantly improving, by continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying everything every way, has rendered him a great master of most concerns in human life.

"Thus has Mundanus gone on, increasing his knowledge and judgment as fast as his years came upon him, The one only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion. This is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only six years of age; and the old man prays now, in that little form of words, which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning.

"This Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without considering how it might be made, or used to better advantage, has gone on all his life long praying in the same manner as when he was a child; without ever considering how much better, or oftener, he might pray; without considering how improvable the spirit of devotion is, how many helps a wise and reasonable man may call to his assistance, and how necessary it is that our prayers should be enlarged, varied, and suited to the particular state and condition of our lives.

"If Mundanus sees a book of devotion, he passes it by, as he does a spelling-book, because he remembers that he learned to pray so many years ago under his mother, when he learnt to spell.

"Now how poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment and under-



standing in every thing, but that which is the whole wisdom of man !

“ And how miserably do many people, more or less, imitate this conduct !

“ All which seems to be owing to a strange infatuated state of negligence, which keeps people from considering what devotion is. For if they did but once proceed so far as to reflect about it, or ask themselves any questions concerning it, they would soon see that the spirit of devotion was like any other sense or understanding, that is only to be improved by study, care, application, and the use of such means and helps as are necessary to make a man proficient in any art or science.”

In the sixteenth chapter Law passes on to consider the hours of prayer, the third, sixth, and ninth, which have been usually observed by devout Christians. Whether we keep these or not, the thoughts that Law connects with them are well worthy of our study. In order that prayer may not evaporate in generalities, he suggests humility as the first subject as being a suitable foundation for the day. In contrast with the misplaced pride of human beings, he bids us observe the temper of heavenly beings. “ Turn your eyes towards heaven and fancy that you saw what is doing there ; that you saw Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, all united in one work ; not seeking glory from one another, not labouring their own advancement, not contemplating their own perfections, not singing their own praises, not valuing themselves, and despising others, but all employed in one and the same work ; all happy in one and

the same joy ; casting down their crowns before the throne of God ; giving glory and honour and power to Him alone.

“ Let a man, when he is most delighted with his own figure, look upon a crucifix, and contemplate our Blessed Lord stretched out and nailed upon a cross : and then let him consider how absurd it must be, for a heart full of pride and vanity to pray to God through the sufferings of such a meek and crucified Saviour ? ” The Cross of Christ he adds (ch. 17) was the glory of Christians ; their glorying in a Religion which was nothing else but a doctrine of the Cross, that called them to the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of themselves, the same renunciation of the world, reproaches and contempts, and the same dying to all greatness, the honours, and happiness of the world, which Christ showed upon the Cross.

In the twentieth chapter he suggests a subject for prayer at noon. In two of the intervening chapters he enters on a discussion upon education ; but I will not turn aside to that now—but follow the subject of prayer. As the next subject of prayer in the day, he proposes Christian love and kindness to all.

“ We are obliged to this love, in imitation of God’s goodness, that we may be children of our Father which is in Heaven, Who willeth the happiness of all His creatures, and maketh His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good. Our redemption by Christ Jesus calleth us to the exercise of this love, Who came from heaven, and laid down His life, out of love to the whole sinful world. And He has commanded and required us to love one another as He has loved us. Moreover, God

loves us, not because we are wise and good and holy, but in pity to us. He loves us, in order to make us good. Our love therefore must take this course, not looking for merit in others, but pitying their disorders, and wishing for them all the good they want, and are capable of receiving."

From this duty of universal love, flows the duty of intercessory prayer. In the twenty-first chapter the author sets forth the duty and value of intercessory prayer in a most impressive manner. First, he quotes well-known instances how St. Paul prayed for his converts, and they at his request for him, showing that the apostle fully recognised that he received spiritual benefit by means of their prayers. (2 Cor. i. 11.)

But, besides the effect produced by such prayer in bringing down answers from God, Law goes on to show what an important effect such prayers have on ourselves, as producing kindly, loving feelings for all for whom we pray. Petty, ill-natured passions die away when we pray for those towards whom we entertained such feelings. "When you have once habituated your heart to holy intercession you have done a great deal to render it incapable of spite and envy and to make it delight in the happiness of every one. "There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him; and when you can do this sincerely for any man you have fitted your soul for the performance of everything that is kind and civil towards him. Such prayers as these, amongst neighbours and acquaintances, would unite them together. It would exalt and ennoble their souls and teach them to consider one another in a higher state, as members of a spiritual society

that are created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God and fellow-heirs of the same future glory. You cannot possibly have any ill-temper, or show any unkind behaviour to a man for whose welfare you are so much concerned, as to be his advocate with God in private. And you cannot possibly despise or ridicule that man whom your private prayers recommend to the love and favour of God."

"Susurrus is a pious, temperate, good man, remarkable for abundance of excellent qualities. No one more constant at the service of the Church, or whose heart is more affected with it. His charity is so great, that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor.

"Yet Susurrus had a prodigious failing along with these great virtues.

"He had a mighty inclination to hear and discover all the defects and infirmities of all about him. You were welcome to tell him anything of anybody, provided that you did not do it in the style of an enemy. He never disliked an evil-speaker but when his language was rough and passionate. If you would but whisper anything gently, though it was ever so bad in itself, Susurrus was ready to receive it.

"When he visits, you generally hear him relating how sorry he is for the defects and failings of such a neighbour. He is always letting you know how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbour; how loth to say that which he is forced to say, and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be concealed.

"Susurrus had such a tender, compassionate manner of relating things the most prejudicial to his neighbour,

that he even seemed, both to himself and others, to be exercising a Christian charity, at the same time that he was indulging a whispering evil-speaking temper.

“Susurrus once whisper’d to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad to be spoke of publicly. He ended with saying how glad he was that it had not yet took wind, and that he had some hopes it might not be true, though the suspicions were very strong. His friend made him this reply :

‘ You say, Susurrus, that you are glad it has not yet taken wind ; and that you have some hopes it may not prove true. Go home therefore to your closet, and pray to God for this man, in such a manner, and with such earnestness, as you would pray for yourself on the like occasion.

‘ Beseech God to interpose in his favour, to save him from false accusers, and bring all those to shame, who, by uncharitable whispers and secret stories wound him, like those that stab in the dark. And when you have made this prayer, then you may, if you please, go tell the same secret to some other friend that you have told to me.’

“Susurrus was exceedingly affected with this rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conscience in as lively a manner as if he had seen the books opened at the Day of Judgment.

“From that time to this, he has constantly used himself to this method of intercession ; and his heart is so entirely changed by it, that he can now no more privately whisper any thing to the prejudice of another than he can openly pray to God to do people hurt.

“ Whisperings and evil-speakings now hurt his ears, like oaths and curses ; and he has appointed one day in the week to be a day of penance as long as he lives, to humble himself before God, in the sorrowful confession of his former guilt.

“ It may well be wondered how a man of so much piety as Susurrus could be so long deceived in himself as to live in such a state of scandal and evil-speaking without suspecting himself to be guilty of it. But it was the tenderness and seeming compassion with which he heard and related everything that deceived both himself and others.

“ This was a falseness of heart which was only to be fully discovered by the true charity of intercession.

“ And if people of virtue, who think as little harm of themselves as Susurrus did, were often to try their spirit by such an intercession, they would often find themselves to be such as they least of all suspected.

“ Ouranius is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the Gospel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor country village. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself ; and he loves them all, as he loves himself, because he prays for them all, as often as he prays for himself.

“ If his whole life is one continual exercise of great zeal and labour, hardly ever satisfied with any degrees of care and watchfulness, 'tis because he has learned the great value of souls by so often appearing before God as an intercessor for them.

“ He never thinks he can love or do enough for his flock ; because he never considers them in any other view than as so many persons that by receiving the

gifts and graces of God are to become his hope, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing.

“ He goes about his parish, and visits everybody in it, but visits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them ; he visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice and counsel, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them according to their particular necessities.

“ When Ouranium first entered into holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt and disregard for all foolish and unreasonable people ; but he has prayed away this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners ; because he is always hoping that God will sooner or later hear those prayers that he makes for their repentance.

“ The rudeness, ill-nature, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock, used at first to betray him into impatience ; but it now raises no other passion in him, than a desire of being upon his knees in prayer to God for them. Thus have his prayers for others altered and amended the state of his own heart.

“ It would strangely delight you to see with what spirit he converses, with what tenderness he reproves, with what affection he exhorts, and with what vigour he preaches ; and 'tis all owing to this, because he reproves, exhorts, and preaches to those for whom he first prays to God.

“ This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes everything that comes from him instructive, amiable and affecting.

“ At his first coming to his little village, it was as

disagreeable to him as a prison, and every day seemed too tedious to be endured in so retired a place. He thought his parish was too full of poor and mean people, that were none of them fit for the conversation of a gentleman.

“ This put him upon a close application to his studies. He kept much at home, writ notes upon Homer and Plautus, and sometimes thought it hard to be called to pray by any poor body when he was just in the midst of one of Homer’s battles.

“ This was his polite, or I may say rather, poor, ignorant turn of mind, before devotion had got the government of his heart. But now his days are so far from being tedious, or his parish too great a retirement, that he now only wants more time to do that variety of good which his soul thirsts after. The solitude of his little parish is become matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes that God has placed him and his flock there to make it their way to heaven.

“ He can now not only converse with, but gladly attend and wait upon, the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the weak and infirm, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people, wherever he can find them ; and is so far from desiring to be considered as a gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant of all ; and in the spirit of his Lord and Master girds himself, and is glad to kneel down and wash any of their feet.

“ He now thinks the poorest creature in his parish good enough, and great enough, to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices, he can possibly show them.



“ He is so far now from wanting agreeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world, than to be talking with poor and mean people about the kingdom of heaven.

“ All these noble thoughts and divine sentiments are the effects of his great devotion ; he presents every one so often before God in his prayers that he never thinks he can esteem, reverence, or serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

“ Ouranius is mightily affected with this passage of Holy Scripture: ‘ The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’ (James iv. 16.)

“ This makes him practise all the arts of holy living, and aspire after every instance of piety and righteousness that his prayers for his flock may have their full force and avail much with God.

“ For this reason he has sold a small estate that he had, and has erected a charitable retirement for ancient, poor people to live in prayer and piety, that his prayers being assisted by such good works may pierce the clouds, and bring down blessings upon those souls committed to his care.

“ Ouranius reads how God himself said unto Abimelech concerning Abraham, ‘ He is a Prophet ; he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live.’ (Gen. xx. 7.)

“ And again, how he said of Job, ‘ And my servant Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept.’ Job xlii. 8).

“ From these passages Ouranius justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness of life, have an extraordinary power with God ; that he grants to other people such pardons, reliefs and blessings,

through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety and perfection. This makes Ouranius exceeding studious of Christian perfection, searching after every grace and holy temper, purifying his heart all manner of ways, fearful of every error and defect in his life, lest his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God, through his own defect in holiness.

“ This makes him careful of every temper of his heart, give alms of all that he hath, watch, and fast, and mortify, and live according to the strictest rules of temperance, meekness and humility, that he may be in some degree, like an Abraham, or a Job, in his parish, and make such prayers for them, as God will hear and accept.

“ These are the happy effects, which a devout intercession hath produced in the life of Ouranius.”

In concluding this short sketch of the *Serious Call*, the hope may fully be expressed that the reader will be induced to have recourse to the original work, the preceding pages being intended to show how well worthy of study it is, by the production of a good example of its teaching. It will be evident from the passages quoted that it is very far from being dull, and that its racy satire, as well as its sound advice, are calculated to attract the student and to impress his memory.

PART II.

WILLIAM LAW ON CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM.

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—St. John i. 9.

“Christ in you the hope of glory.”—Col. i. 27.

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.”—Gal. iv. 19.

“We, through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”—Gal. v. 5.

## WILLIAM LAW

### ON CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

THE later works of Law are those in which his own mysticism is chiefly dealt with. These are the *Appeal to all who doubt*, the *Way to Divine Knowledge* the *Spirit of Prayer*, and the *Spirit of Love*. In the book which we considered last time, the *Serious Call*, there is no mysticism. Yet the later life of his soul was in no sense contradictory to the earlier life. It was in a great degree the outcome of it, mingled with other influences. He had in early days taken pains to do the Will of God, and so he learnt to know, with greater fulness and assurance, of the doctrine that it was of God. Alongside his remarkably practical Christianity, he had always been fond of the old mystic writers. So when he was entering into the spiritual reward of his long practice of obedience, the enlightenment he received was naturally mingled with mysticism. But it was a mysticism which never lost sight of the practical duties of life and never disparaged, as some of the former mystics had done, the necessity of active love and helpfulness to our neighbour, as flowing from our love to God and His enabling Grace.

Before we enter into a consideration of the phrase of mysticism represented by Law it will be necessary to regard the salient points which characterise mysticism in general, and to give some attention to the question, What is mysticism and what is Christian mysticism ?

The following pages are meant to show that : *Christian mysticism is, in the first place, that essence of personal communion with God which is present in all vital religion. Further, among those who specially call themselves mystics, great emphasis is laid upon this seeking of the union of the soul with God ; and the blessings of it are offered to all men in virtue of the divine spark latent in every one, and through the new birth, or birth from above, whereby the likeness of the Christ is to be formed in each soul.*

So that Christian mysticism is not a departure from Christianity, but rather the insistence upon certain important features of it.

Let me guard at the outset against two objections. Mystics may be looked upon as eccentric persons. There have been false and erroneous mystics, and they have brought discredit on true mystics : just as all religious errors bring discredit on true religion. False and erroneous mystics are those who regard themselves as the favourites or chosen ones of God, and who look upon the grace they have received as quite an exceptional gift, whereas the true mystic looks upon that grace as open to every one who will fulfil the necessary conditions. The false mystic lays emphasis on visions and ecstatic conditions, the reliableness of which is difficult to test ; and again, the false mystic thinks he has risen above the ordinances and sacraments of religion, into a region in which he is independent of them, as if he

were already in heaven, and no longer a fallible man. These kind of persons have brought the name of mystic into disrepute.

Another objection likely to be brought against mysticism is that it is wanting in clearness. The ordinary practical Englishman would probably derive it from the word "misty," and indeed a learned and talented preacher is said to have been walking with a friend near Westminster, when the latter remarked on the fog that prevailed. "Yes," said the preacher, "no doubt that Canon — has opened his window and let out the fog."

It would however be a want of candour not to admit that those who have fully intended to be true mystics have not unfrequently erred in their views, and have fallen into eccentricities, and have tried to penetrate beyond what could be made clear. Speculative and metaphysical enquiries have been taken up which could bring no definite result ; such enquiries could lead to no certain conclusions, could definitely establish no truth and were valueless for the conduct of life.

But mysticism is not necessarily unreal or devoid of clearness, and as treated by sane writers like Canon Overton, Dean Inge, and Dr. Illingworth is well worthy of study. Nor is it as a word, as might be supposed, derived from the adjective "misty." Its origin, as all students know, is Greek. There were Greek mysteries, apparently derived from the East ; these were very solemn ceremonies, showing far deeper religious feeling (at any rate until they became corrupted) than most of us would have credited the Greeks with entertaining. They were rites in which repentance, confession

of sin, ceremonies of purification, and subsequent initiation into religious secrets, each had a successive part. It is interesting to learn that heathen mysteries were still in existence in the fourth century of the Christian era. Dr. Bigg (*"The Church's Task in the Roman Empire,"* pp. 86, 87,) quotes a wonderfully beautiful epitaph inscribed by Paulina, the loving wife of a distinguished man, Agorius Praetextatus, on his tomb. Part of it is as follows :

" O husband, teacher, those whose tender care  
Discipl'd me in virtue, saved from snare  
Of Death, and led within the temple gate,  
The handmaid of the gods to consecrate,  
Thou wast my sponsor in the mysteries.  
Thou Cybele and Attis didst appease  
For me with blood of bulls, and didst me teach  
The triple secret of dark Hecate,  
And make me meet to worship at the shrine  
Of Eleusinian Ceres."

A mystery meant initiation into profound knowledge, which could only be gradually revealed, and never fully known. The word mystery is derived from the word *μύω* which means, in Greek, to close the lips or eyes. There are two meanings in its reference to mysticism as given by Dean Inge; the most likely of the two I think, is that the initiated is to keep his mouth shut, as being partaker of a revelation too deep for unrepentant men.

An account of the Greek mysteries will be found in the appendix to Dean Inge's Bampton lectures. The mysteries of Isis and Mithra are noticed by Dr. Bigg in his work. We cannot say more about these now, and must refer to another aspect of Greek mysticism, the philosophy of Plato. It has been questioned whether



we can call Plato a mystic, but it cannot be denied that there is plenty of mysticism in his philosophy ; for instance, the following tenets :<sup>1</sup>

That the highest good is the greatest likeness to God.

That the greatest happiness is the vision of God.

That we should seek holiness not for the sake of eternal reward, but because it is the health of the soul, while vice is its disease.

That goodness is unity and harmony, while evil is discord and disintegration.

That it is our duty and happiness to rise above the visible and transitory to the invisible and permanent.

Plato, says Dean Inge, is the Father of European mysticism. That early Christian writer, Justin Martyr, claims Plato as a Christian before Christ ; Clement of Alexandria regards the Gospel as sanctioning Platonism, while in the middle ages, the mystics almost canonized Plato, and Eckhart, the German philosophic mystic, calls Plato the " great Priest."

Clement of Alexandria, who died about 220, endeavoured to show the meeting points of philosophy and Christianity. He constantly uses mystery-language. The Christian revelation is that of " Divine mysteries, of the unfolding of the Divine secrets, Jesus Christ is the Teacher of the Divine mysteries," while the ordinary teaching of the Church is that of the " lesser mysteries." And he called the Gospel of St. John " the spiritual Gospel."

St. Chrysostom (died 407) defines a mystery as follows :

" A mystery is that which is everywhere proclaimed

<sup>1</sup> v. Inge, Bampton Lectures.

but which is not understood by those who have not right judgment. It is revealed, not by cleverness, but by the Holy Ghost, as we are able to receive it. And so we may call a mystery a secret, for even to the faithful it is not committed in all its fulness and clearness."

St. Augustine and St. Bernard show much of the mystic spirit. In the middle ages, and within the mediæval church, there were mystics, in Spain, in Germany, in England. In the long line of German mystics, Tauler<sup>1</sup> was one of the best, being at once very spiritual, and also fully devoted to practical work for the souls of men and women.

Molinos is well known among Spanish mystics as having been persecuted by the authorities of the Roman Church. The Jesuits were opposed to mysticism, because it seemed to raise people above the need of a constant reference to the priests for help.

In France Fenelon and Madame Guyon were well-known mystics.

There is an element of mysticism in all real and personal religion. Real Religion requires inward, personal communion with God, individual communion of the heart with God. And if my description of what mysticism means is approximately correct, this element of mysticism in religion, means initiation by the Holy Spirit into personal communion with the Father of our Spirits. Christian mysticism means admission into communion with our God and Father through His revelation in His Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. In all cases this is an inward, vital realization ;

<sup>1</sup> v. Appendix B.

no mere outward forms will accomplish it, though they may open the door to it. This has been recognised by all Christians, even by those Christians who would not wish to be called mystics. So, for instance, the Collect for All Saints' Day speaks of "the mystical body of Thy Son Jesus Christ," as meaning those who are in vital union with Him, and in our Prayer-book the Eucharist is designated, in accordance with much primitive language, as the Holy Mysteries. We are initiated into feeding on the Divine Humanity of Christ, though as in all mystery, there is much behind that still remains unknown. From these considerations it appears that there is mysticism in all real personal religion. The point is an important one.

The Gospels contain many passages bearing on the inner life, and on the union of the soul with God, which may be called mystical. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Again, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them," "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world."

This is especially so in the Gospel of St. John, and in his Epistle. Three great truths about God are especially insisted upon in these. "God is Love, God is Light, and God is a Spirit." And St. John's supreme lesson for mankind is "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us." Then there is the new birth, a doctrine dear to mystics, the necessity of being born again or born from above. So, too, the mystical union of souls in Christ, as it is referred to by St. Paul, so is it also in St. John, who records the well-known words of our Lord's prayer, "that they may all be one, even as Thou

Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us." (R.V.)

Whether the book of Revelation was written by St. John the Apostle or by another John, there are in it decidedly mystical passages. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"— "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." These last words show the personal, the individual, character of this revealing. Again, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne," words which cannot be taken otherwise than in a spiritual and mystical meaning. Our own collect says, "*cui servire est regnare.*" "Whom to serve is to reign." (The second collect for Morning Prayer).

Again, St. Paul is full of mysticism. He says "It pleased God, who called me by His grace, to reveal His Son within me." And the man who has the Spirit dwelling in him has the mind of Christ. There are degrees of initiation. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect," he says. Another mystical idea, in St. Paul, is that the Christian must live through in his own experience the life, death, and resurrection of his Lord "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." "For ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God."

We assert then that St. John and St. Paul are full of mysticism. And if this be true, it cannot be said that mysticism in its essential features is visionary and unreal. On the contrary, it is the essence of religion. But what is there besides by which those who call themselves mystics can be distinguished? Just as the High Churchman lays more stress upon some aspects of Christianity than upon others, and Evangelicals do the same in their way, so mystics lay stress upon certain aspects of Christianity.

When we speak of mysticism and mystics in connexion with those who are especially so called, we shall find that, in so far as they are on sure grounds, they only developed more than most Christians those doctrines which are most connected with the union of the soul with God. Mystics teach that the soul is capable of direct union with God, and may enjoy direct access to Him and communion with Him. They regard the direct union of the soul with God as their highest aim. They emphasize this truth, which belongs to all Christianity, with especial strength.

The distance strikes us as a great one between the goal of mysticism, the union of the Soul with God, and the first awakening of the latent spark of the divine life. How is the progress from this rudimentary life to its full development to be effectual? Again, we hear the mystic emphasizing what is already Christian doctrine. He who would attain the goal must sink into nothingness in his own esteem. He must be humbled in the dust if he is to be raised up. And not only humbled at the beginning; humility is to be for all eternity the condition that will render him capable of

receiving. By such self-emptying he must put off the old man and put on the new ; the new man which is to take the place of the old man in the soul. The old man must gradually be cast out that the new man in Christ Jesus may be formed within. " Without holiness," that is separation from sin, " no man shall see the Lord." The vision of God cannot be attained without the gradual overcoming of our lower selves. There is in us all a lower and a higher nature, the lower nature must be fought against and suppressed, that the higher may rule over it. Without self-discipline, Christian mysticism is impossible.

There is another point which has been noticed by recent writers on mysticism, such as Dean Inge and Dr. Illingworth and the Rev. Rowland Corbet. The union of the soul with God, the communion with God that leads onward towards that goal, cannot be really attained without communion with our fellow-men. " He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? " There have been mystics throughout the ages who have failed to perceive this, and have stunted their soul's life thereby. Indian mysticism shuts its eyes to this truth under the delusion that, by doing so, it can the better draw near to the one supreme Goodness. The same error crept into and damaged a great deal of Christian mysticism in the middle ages. So St. Theresa, the Spanish mystic, exclaims, " Oh, if we religious did but understand what harm we receive by frequently conversing with our relations, how we should shun them." And the mediæval saint and visionary, Angela of Foligno, congratulates herself on the death of her mother, husband, and children, " who," she says,

“were great obstacles in the way of God.”<sup>1</sup> And it is related of one of the pillar-saints, that when after many years his mother came that she might at least take one last look at him, he turned his head away.” But, without such gross exaggerations as this error, the German mystics of the middle ages held the same theory. Happily, they, as well as the Spaniards, were better than their creed, for they abounded in works of charity and active benevolence. So the going out of a self-centred religion into finding the Christ in His brethren, is a necessary part of any true Christian mysticism, and is indeed involved in the collect I have previously quoted, which tells us that Christians are united in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ. The expression is of course drawn from the teaching of St. Paul, and both he and St. John, who were mystics in the best sense of the word, lay the greatest stress on the claims of humanity upon the heart of all who would seek God.

Thus far there does not seem anything in Christian mysticism that need take us away from our usual Christianity; it rather tends to emphasise with helpful power Christian teachings that we often receive without adequate impression.

We have seen that the Christian mystic looks within to the Divine light which he believes to be latent in his soul, and which at God's command can awake and radiate through it. But there is another source of divine teaching which he shares with non-Christian mystics and that is the symbolism of the natural world. It is sanctioned for him by the Bible, but poets have also

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Inge.

taught it, and the Christian poet of our age, Keble, has referred to it in well-known lines.

There is a book, who runs may read,  
Which heavenly truth imparts,  
And all the lore its scholars need,  
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The works of God, above, below,  
Within us and around,  
Are pages in that book to show  
How God Himself is found.

\* \* \* \*

Two worlds are ours ; 'tis only sin  
Forbids us to descry  
The mystic heaven and earth within,  
Pure as the sea and sky.

Thou, Who hast given me eyes to see  
And love this sight so fair,  
Give me a heart to find out Thee,  
And read Thee everywhere.

*Christian Year, Septuagesima.*

Wordsworth (as quoted by Dean Inge) explains to us the value of natural objects. Wordsworth teaches that the symbolic value of natural objects is not that they remind us of something that they are not, but that they help us to understand something that they in part are.

This view of natural objects as expressions of spiritual thought is sanctioned by the Bible. The Psalmist finds the rocks of his country to be the best images to him of the strength of God, and exclaims, "Thou art my rock and my fortress," and Isaiah bids us "trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord, Jehovah, is the Rock of Ages." The refreshing streams are emblems of the living water of the Holy Spirit. The wind tells us of His inspiration, the fire of the heaven-sent fervour that falls on those that sacrifice before Him. St. Paul observes that the



natural world could impart the assurance of the might of God. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they were without excuse, when knowing God, if they did not glorify Him and were not thankful." And in well-known words St. Paul reminds us that the sadder aspects of the natural world witness to the expectation of deliverance from suffering: "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together with us until now." Our Lord Himself teaches us the same. He found in the seed of corn, which is buried and lives again and so produces fruit, the image of His own suffering and its result. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it beareth much fruit."

<sup>1</sup> Some of the Greek fathers, as well as the Latin and later Catholics, and also some of the Reformers, speak of the symbolism of Nature.

"The wider our contemplation of creation," says St. Cyril, "the grander is our conception of God."

<sup>1</sup> I owe all the following quotations to Dr. Illingworth's *Divine Immanence*. I have received his permission to quote them.

"Earth," says St. Basil, "earth, air, sky, water, day, night, all things visible, remind us Who is our benefactor." "The more profoundly we penetrate the laws on which the universe is founded and sustained, the more do we behold the glory of the Lord."

And again :

"If ever on a bright night, while gazing at the stars in all their beauty, you have thought of the Creator of all things ; if you have asked yourself Who it is that has bespangled heaven with such flowers, and endowed all things with usefulness even greater than their beauty ; if ever in the daytime you have studied the wonders of the light and raised yourself by things visible to the invisible Being, then you are a fit auditor (of Christian truth)."

Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's brother and fellow-follower of Origen, has similar thoughts :—

"Look only," he says, "at an ear of corn, at the budding of a plant, at a bunch of ripe grapes, at the beauty in fruit and flower of the early autumn ; at the mountains, their bases green with grass which no human hand has sown, while their summits cleave the azure of the sky ; at the springs that issue from their swelling slopes, to run in rivers through the glens ; at the sea that receives all waters, yet remains within its bounds ; its waves, stayed by the shoreside, which they can never pass beyond. Look at these and such-like sights, and can the eye of reason fail to read in them lessons of eternal truth ?"

In the works erroneously attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite we read : "Matter had its origin in the uncreated loveliness, and throughout the whole range

of matter there are echoes of spiritual beauty, through which we may be led to their immaterial archetypes."

Nor is it only the Greek Fathers who say things like this :

"Who can look on nature," asks St. Hilary, "and not see God?"

"Every aspect and process of nature," says Augustine, "proclaims its Creator; with diverse moods and changes like a variety of tongues."

And again, Gregory the Great :

"If we look attentively enough at outward, material things we are recalled by them to inward, spiritual things. For the wonders of the visible creation are the footprints of our Creator; Himself as yet we cannot see, but we are on the road that leads to vision, when we admire Him in the things He has made. And so we call created things His footprints, since they are made by Him and guide us to Himself."

Here is a passage from the German mystic, Suso :

"Oh how cloudlessly and cheerfully the beautiful sun rises in the summer season, and how diligently it gives growth and blessings to the soil; how the leaves and the grass come forth; how the beautiful flowers smile; how the forest and the heath, and the meadows resound with the sweet songs of the nightingale and other small birds; how all the animals which were shut up during the hard winter come forth and enjoy themselves and go in pairs; how, in humanity, young and old manifest their joy in merry and gladsome utterances! O tender God! If Thou art so loving in Thy creatures, how fair and lovely must Thou be in Thyself! Look further, I pray you, and behold the four elements,

—earth, water, air, and fire,—and all the wonderful things in them; the variety and diversity of men, beasts, birds, and fishes, and the wonders of the deep, all of which cry aloud and proclaim the praise and honour of the boundless and infinite nature of God! O Lord, who preserves all this? Who feeds it? Thou takest care of all, each in its own way, great and small, rich and poor. Thou, God! Thou doest it! Thou God, art indeed God!”

Luther, again, was notorious for his religious love of nature. But it is not so well known that Zwingli felt the same:

“From God,” he says, “as from a fountain, all things arise into being. By God’s power all things exist, live and operate; even in Him Who is everywhere present; and after His pattern Who is the essence, the existence, the life of the universe. Nor is man alone of divine origin; but all creatures, though some are nobler and more august than others. Yet all alike are from God and in God, and in proportion to their nobility they express more of the divine power and glory. We recognize in things inanimate, not less than in man, the presence of the divine power by which they exist, and live, and move. God is in the stars; and inasmuch as the stars are from Him and in Him, they have no essence or power or movement of their own; it is all God’s, and they are merely the instruments through which the present power of God acts. For for this cause He called creatures into being, that man, from the contemplation of their mutual uses, might learn to recognize God’s active presence everywhere and especially in himself, when he saw it in all things else around.”

"Catholic theology, again, is fundamentally opposed on many points to Protestant. Yet here they are agreed. The following passage from Fenelon is thoroughly typical of the great Catholic writers of the seventeenth century. But it might almost be mistaken for a continuation of the above."<sup>1</sup>

"I see God in everything ; or, rather, I see everything in God . . . All that exists, exists only by the communication of God's infinite being. All that has intelligence, has it only by derivation from His sovereign reason, and all that acts, acts only from the impulse of His supreme activity. It is He who does all in all ; it is He who, at each instant of our life, is the beating of our heart, the movement of our limbs, the light of our eyes, the intelligence of our spirit, the soul of our soul. All that is in us, life, action, thought, will, is the product of His eternal power, and life, and thought, and will."

I have observed that Law had always been fond of the mystical writers ; but in the latter part of his career, the deepest mystical influence that he received was that of Jacob Böhme—an extraordinary, and, it must be admitted, a very eccentric genius. Böhme was born in the year 1575 in Germany, and was a shoemaker. Early in life he had visions, or thought he had them, which set before him a revelation from God and also opened to him the mysticism of the natural world around him. The religious opinions resulting from these he put into writing, but his writings were condemned by the authorities. Later, he was summoned before the Elector of Saxony and some learned divines. Böhme

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*.

gave his replies with so much wisdom and modesty that he was fully acquitted. His opinions attracted wide attention in Germany, and were regarded by many as a new revelation of Christian truth—partly suggested by the natural world, and partly given by divine illumination in the soul. But he had his enemies also there, and when his writings reached England they met with much condemnation. The great Sir Isaac Newton, however, devoted two months to the study of them, and it is alleged that hints they contained suggested to Newton some of his discoveries. Böhme's object is to demonstrate in everything its necessity by tracing its origin to the attributes of God. He endeavours to work out a parallelism between the visible physical world and invisible and metaphysical things. He died in 1624.

Few Englishmen have in the present day studied the works of Böhme.<sup>1</sup> We cannot doubt that some important elements of divine truth were impressed on him by the Holy Spirit; but at the same time many of his views as to the natural world in its connexion with the spiritual world were very wild and would not stand in the light of modern science. By these Law was more or less misled, and when referred to in Law's writings, they must seem to us an inconvenient interruption to his spiritual counsels. But as a highly educated scholar, Law was able to set forth the principles discussed.

We will now turn for a few moments to Law's essay on *The Spirit of Love*. He begins by observing that God is an "Eternal Will to all Goodness. As certainly

<sup>1</sup> Appendix A.

as He is the Creator, so certainly He is the Blessor of every created thing and can give nothing but blessing, goodness, and happiness, from Himself. It is much more possible for the sun to give forth darkness, than for God to do or be or give forth anything but blessing and goodness. This then is the Spirit of Love, the nature of God Himself, and from Him flows the spirit of love in the creature, and that must be a Will to all Goodness." We have not, says Law, the spirit of love till we have this will to all goodness at all times and on all occasions. "For you may do many works of love and delight in them, especially at such times as they are not inconvenient to you, or contradictory to your state of temper or occurrences of life. But the spirit of love is not in you, till you live freely, willingly, and universally according to it. The spirit of love, wherever it is, is its own blessing and happiness, because it is the same Truth and Reality of God in the soul, and therefore is the same joy of life, and is the same good to itself, everywhere, and on every occasion." "Oh, Sir," continues Law, "would you know the blessing of all blessings, it is this God of Love dwelling in your soul, and killing every root of bitterness, which is the pain and torment of every earthly selfish love. For then every day is a day of peace, everything you meet becomes a help to you, because everything you see or do is all done in the sweet gentle element of love. The spirit of love does not want to be rewarded, honoured or esteemed, its only desire is to propagate itself, and become the blessing and happiness of everything that wants it. And therefore it meets wrath and evil and hatred and opposition, with the same one will as the

light meets the darkness, only to overcome it with all its blessings. Did you want to avoid the wrath and ill-will, or to gain the favour of any persons, you might easily miss your ends, but if you have no will but to all goodness, everything you meet, be it what it will, must be forced to be assistant to you. For the wrath of an enemy, the treachery of a friend, and every other ill, only helps the spirit of love to be more triumphant, to live its own life, and find all its own blessings in a higher degree."

"Now as to the necessity of the spirit of love, observe that no creature can be a child of God, but because the goodness of God is in it, nor can it have any union or communion with the goodness of the Deity, till its life is a spirit of love. For the Divine Will can unite or work with no creature but that which wills with Him only that which is good. Nothing will do instead of this will, all contrivances of holiness, all forms of religious piety, signifying nothing, without this will to all goodness. Everything that follows an own will, or an own spirit forsakes the one will to all goodness, and so loses capacity for the light and spirit of God."

We have seen that Law identifies Christian love with the will to all goodness. Now the will is a force, and it may be helpful to compare these expressions with some remarks of Dr. Mozley in his well-known sermons. Mozley observes that as Aristotle speaks of a virtue or energy, which is not so much a virtue in itself as it is the life of all other virtues, so St. Paul in the 13th chap. of 1 Corinthians, means to teach us that Christian love is not merely a virtue in itself, but it is the force which gives life to all other virtues. We have heard in Greek



mythology of a sculptor who made a statue, and the gods gave it life. So the other virtues are but as cold statues till the fire of divine love from heaven gives to them a living vitality. This may illustrate what Law means by the love which gives force to the Christian soul, or, in other words, gives it the will to all goodness. It is remarkable, also, that St. Francis de Sales uses words almost identical with Law's; some one asks Francis, "I know that Christian perfection is Love, and that one must love God for Himself, and man for love of God; but I want to know what it is to love?"

Francis replies, "Love is that which prompts us to whatever is good."

But how is this love, or force towards what is good, to be attained?

"Everyone that is to be good and happy must have more than his merely natural life. He must have a two-fold life. First he has the natural life that he has in any case, and secondly he must have the infused life that is from God."<sup>1</sup> "Natural life," says Law, "can have only in it a capacity for goodness and happiness, and cannot possibly be a good and happy life, but by the life of God dwelling in it. The infused life that is from God can meet the divine element that lies hidden beneath the natural life, the divine spark in the soul, the Christ in man, as the mystics call it, and then the life from God cherished in the soul will gradually become supreme over the natural life, casting out its evil and drawing the soul into union with God. All that we know of God in union with the creaturely life (made

<sup>1</sup> Appendix B,

known in the Gospel of salvation) is the one only possibility of goodness and happiness in any creature." And when this has been set up, the creature is not furnished once for all with a supply of the divine life ; but must receive constantly fresh inspiration from God. A perpetual always existing operation of the Spirit of God within us is absolutely necessary. If our thoughts, wills, and affections are to be always holy and good, then the holy and good Spirit of God is to be always operating, as a principle of life within us.

"The love of God sought our salvation by His Son Jesus Christ. The Atonement proceeded from the Love of God, His forgiving Love. It was not," says Law, "meant to appease wrath. The object of the life and sufferings, and death of Christ, was to work out a perfect righteousness which might afterwards be imparted to human souls that should be born again in Him. No sacrifices, sufferings and death have any place in religion, but to satisfy and fulfil that Love of God which could not be satisfied without our salvation. If the Son of God is not spared, if He is delivered up to the rage and malice of men, devils and Hell, it is because unless we had such a Captain of our Salvation, made perfect through suffering, it could never have been sung, "O Death, where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory?"

"God is Love, and he that has learnt to live in the spirit of love has learned to live and dwell in God. Love was the beginning of all the works of God, and from eternity to eternity nothing can come from God but a variety of wonders and works of love, over all nature and creatures." Hereabouts in his dialogue

Law points out that much stress is to be laid on the thought of Christ being formed within us, and that His life should, in our degree or measure, reproduce itself in us.

This development of the Christ within is spoken of by St. Paul in the passage where he says, "My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," and in passages I have already quoted he shows how the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection is to be reproduced in the life of our own souls. This is a point dear to Christian mystics, "Christ not only given for us, but Christ given into us. And He is not our full perfect and sufficient atonement, unless His nature and spirit are born and formed in us, which so purge us from our sins, that we are thereby in Him, and by Him dwelling in us, become new creatures, having our conversation in heaven."

"Wonder not," Law adds, "that all the true followers of Christ, the saints of every age, have so gloried in the Cross of Christ, have imputed such great things to it, have desired nothing so much as to be partakers of it, to live in constant union with it. It is because His sufferings, His death, His Cross, were the fulness of His victory over all the works of the devil. Not an evil in flesh and blood, not a misery of life, not a chain of death, not a power of hell and darkness, but were all baffled, broken, and overcome, by the process of a suffering and dying Christ. Well, therefore, may the Cross of Christ be the glory of Christians."

One of the friends conversing in Law's dialogue, named Eusebius, remarks in his delight at this doctrine of Love, that he feels that it has got entire possession

of him, and that henceforth everything in him will be under its dominion. To this Theophilus, who represents Law himself, replies, that he is quite under a delusion. He must remember that the spirit of love is not merely an emotion of feeling ; which makes him think that he has already attained love. The spirit of love is a new birth, a new power in the soul. To open up the way for this renewal of your soul you must renounce and give up all that you have of the old man. We have to pay a considerable price of giving up, if the spirit of love is to take possession of us. All that we are of the old man must be given up, absolutely denied and resisted, if the birth of divine love is to be brought forth in us, we must put off the old man and put on the new. By the way of patience and humility we must die to self. Is it difficult ? By union of heart with Christ, our Redeemer, we can obtain the graces which our own efforts could not give us.

PART III.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER AND THE WAY TO  
DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.



LAW's work, entitled the *Spirit of Prayer*, consists of an Introductory Essay, followed by a conversation between *Theophilus*, representing Law himself, and several seekers after truth. These are, *Academicus*, who is too much occupied with the merely theoretical and literary side of Theology, *Rusticus*, a plain man, who cannot read, but is ready to accept the teaching of *Theophilus* with simplicity, and *Humanus*, a silent listener, a man of classical tastes. They make enquiries, or raise objections, and ask for replies. The use of dialogues leads to a lively interchange of thought, thus avoiding the difficulty of a merely didactic treatment, and giving scope for the racy expressions whereby the author drives his remarks home. The same mode of treatment occurs in Law's *Spirit of Love*. The leading idea of both treatises is that of the character of Christ being formed in the soul.

It has been held by all mystics that there is a divine element latent somewhere in every human soul. The German mystics called it a divine spark. Law often speaks of it as a seed, or a divine treasure hidden in the soul. These ideas are based upon one of the foundation texts of mysticism, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and

again, we read, "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring down Christ from above, or who shall descend into the deep, that is to bring up Christ from the dead? But what saith it, the word is nigh thee even in thy mouth and in thy heart." So this divine element is described as "Christ hidden in the soul." That divine element is overlaid and kept down by the worldly and evil tendencies of men's hearts, but is there for the Grace of God to work upon, when man awakes to his need of a higher life.

On this point we may note that Law and his friends differ widely from the usual Protestant doctrine, even Luther holding that there is no good whatever in us, till the divine Grace descends to touch us; a common tenet, but a cause of difficulty leading to a Calvinistic view of arbitrary choice on the part of God.<sup>1</sup> For if there is nothing in the heart of man to respond to the Grace of God, there can be no blame to those not amongst the fortunate few involuntarily touched by that Grace. This question led to a controversy between Luther and Erasmus; the latter writing on "*de libero arbitrio*" and the former "*de servo arbitrio*." Was there any free will to accept God's offer, or was there not? Erasmus maintained that there was, and Luther denied it. We cannot doubt that Erasmus was right, and though Erasmus was not a mystic, all mystics would say the same.

But the existence of this divine spark being granted, how is the development of it to take place? We are to be the receivers of the divine mercy and power, not acting for ourselves. but going forth to meet that mercy

<sup>1</sup> This view was founded originally on St. Augustine.



and power. So Law takes the case of the man with the withered hand, as an illustration of this spiritual truth. The inflowing of God's Grace and Life meets the seed or treasure of the divine hidden within, and so the New Birth in Christ is begun. But this development is a gradual process, and mere emotions of delight at the thought of this progress are not enough. What is our part in promoting it? It lies chiefly in clearing away the obstacles to the divine growth. All that is of the old man, says Law, must be steadfastly resisted, a severe principle of giving up of all that we do to please Self must be followed out.

What has all this to do with Prayer? Law remarks, "Religious forms are only of value when used to keep up a continual dying to Self, and all worldly things, and to turn all the will and desire and delight of the soul to God alone (p. 66) Again (p. 97) "when the Spirit of Prayer is born in us, then prayer is no longer considered as only the business of this or that hour, but is the continual panting or breathing of the heart after God."

Again (p. 134) "If you would know what I would call a true and great gift of prayer, and what I most of all wish for myself, it is a good heart, that stands continually inclined towards God."

What Law means is that prayer is the continual aspiration of the heart towards God, whether expressed in words or not. We are to live in the Spirit of Prayer even when we are not actually praying.

On p. 128 of the *Spirit of Prayer* Law notices the three stages of the soul in its heavenward progress—a division which is common to all Christian mysticism. The first is the purgative: "the painful sense and feeling of what

you are, kindled into a working state of sensibility by the Light of God within you, is the fire and light from whence your Spirit of Prayer proceeds. In its first kindling nothing is found or felt but pain, wrath and darkness, as is to be seen in the first kindling of every heat or fire. And therefore its first prayer is nothing else but a sense of penitence, self-condemnation, confession, and humility. It feels nothing but its own misery, and so is all humility. The prayer of humility is met by the Divine Love, the mercifulness of God embraces it; and then its prayer is turned into hymns and songs and thanksgiving."

This second stage is usually designated by mystics the illuminative period of the soul's life; which Law here calls "the state of fervour." "It is the work of this stage to do away with all earthly passions and affections, and leaving no inclination in the soul but to delight in God. In the third, or unitive stage its prayer changes again. It is now come so near God, has found such union with Him, that it does not so much pray as live in God. . . . Prayer is the work of the man's whole being, which continually stands in fulness of Faith, in purity of Love, in absolute Resignation to do and be what and how his Beloved pleases. This is the last state of the Spirit of Prayer, and is its highest union with God in this life."

"Each of these foregoing states has its time, its variety of workings, its trials, temptations and purifications, which can only be known by experience in the passage through them. The one only and infallible way to go safely through all the difficulties, trials, temptations, dryness or opposition of our own evil tempers is this: it is to expect nothing from ourselves, to trust to nothing

in ourselves, but in everything expect and depend upon God for relief. Keep fast hold of this thread, and then, let your way be what it will, darkness, temptation, or the rebellion of nature, you will be led through all to an union with God ; for nothing hurts us in any state but an expectation of something in it and from it which we should only expect from God. We are looking for our *own* virtue, our *own* piety, our *own* goodness, and so live on in our own poverty and weakness ; to-day pleased and comforted with the seeming strength of our own pious tempers, and fancying ourselves to be somewhat ; to-morrow fallen into our own mire, we are dejected, but not humbled ; we grieve, but it is only the grief of pride at the seeing of our perfections not to be such as we vainly imagined. And thus it will be till the whole *turn* of our minds is so changed that we as fully see and know our *inability* to have any goodness of our *own* as to have a life of our own."

" For since nothing is or can be good in us but the life of God manifested in us, how can this be had but from God alone ? When we are happily brought to this conviction, then we have done with all thought of being our own builders ; the whole Spirit of our mind is become a mere Faith and Hope and Trust in the sole operation of God's Spirit, looking no more to any other power to be formed in Christ new creatures than we look to any other power for the resurrection of our bodies at the last day. Hence may be seen that the trials of every state are its greatest blessings : they do that for us which we most of all want to have done—they force us to know our own *nothingness* and the All of God."

We now add some further quotations, dividing them into the steps and order of Law's thought, to illustrate the outline given in the foregoing remarks.

I.—The Divine spark or seed in the soul of every man.

II.—How the Divine spark or seed is to be awakened.

III.—The conditions of progress in the Divine life. The price must be paid by giving up all that is of the old man.

# I

## ON THE DIVINE SPARK OR SEED IN THE SOUL OF EVERY MAN

### "SPIRIT OF PRAYER"

<sup>1</sup>Page 29: "A seed of salvation is sown into the centre of the soul, and only lies hidden there in every man till he desires to rise from his fallen state, and to be born again from above."

Page 28: "Poor sinner! Consider the treasure thou hast within thee, the Saviour of the world, the eternal Word of God lies hid in Thee, as a spark of the Divine nature, which is to overcome Sin and Death and Hell within Thee, and generate the Life of Heaven again in thy soul. Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its Saviour, its God, within itself. Seek for Him in thy heart, and thou wilt never seek in vain, for there He dwells, there is the seat of His Light and Holy Spirit."

Page 30: Thus "we have a treasure hidden in the centre of our souls, which should discover and open itself by degrees in such proportion as the faith and desires of our hearts were turned to it."

<sup>1</sup>The quotations are from the edition referred to in the Prefatory Note printed for Mr. Moreton.

Similar thoughts from the *Spirit of Love*.

Page 49: "If Christ was to raise a new life like His own in every man, then every man must have had originally, in the inmost spirit of his life, a seed of Christ, or Christ, as a seed of heaven, lying there as in a state of insensibility or death, out of which it could not arise but by the mediatorial power of Christ."

Page 48: "Unless there had been a seed of life, or a smothered spark of heaven in the soul of man, which wanted to come to the birth, there had been no possibility for any Dispensation of God to bring forth a birth of heaven in fallen man."

## II

### OF THE AWAKENING OF THE DIVINE SPARK IN THE SOUL OF MAN

("SPIRIT OF PRAYER"—*continued*)

Page 44: "'Stretch forth thy hand,' said our Lord to the man that had a withered hand; he did so, and it was immediately made whole, as the other. Now, had this man any ground for pride, or a higher opinion of himself, for the share he had in the restoring of his hand? Yet just such is our share in the raising up of the spiritual life within us. All that we can do by our own activity is only like this man stretching out his hand; the rest is the work of Christ, the only Giver of Life to the withered hand or the dead soul."

Page 36: "How shall I discover this riches of eternity . . . treasured up within me? Thy first thought of Repentance, or desire of turning to God, is thy first discovery of this Light and Spirit of God

within thee. . . . When, therefore, but the smallest instinct or desire of thy heart calls thee towards God and a newness of life, give it time and leave to speak, and take care that thou refuse not Him that speaketh."

Page 39: "When the call of God to repentance first arises in thy soul thou art to be *retired, silent, passive*, and humbly attentive to this new risen Light within thee, by wholly stopping or disregarding the workings of thy own will, reason and judgment, . . . all these are born and bred in the kingdom of Self."

Page 47: "No sooner is the finite desire of the creature in motion towards God, but the infinite desire of God is united with it, co-operated with it."

Page 54. "We are to cast ourselves with a broken heart at the feet of the Divine mercy."

### III

#### THE CONDITIONS OF PROGRESS IN THE DIVINE LIFE. THE PRICE MUST BE PAID BY GIVING UP ALL THAT IS OF THE OLD MAN

Page 37: "Stand faithfully in this state of preparation, thus given up to the Spirit of God, and thou wilt soon find that He that is within thee, is much greater than all that are against thee."

Page 37: Two great truths. (1) "Nothing can do, or be, a real good to thy soul, but the operation of God upon it." (2) "All the dispensations of God to mankind were only for this one end, to fit, prepare and dispose the soul for the operation of the Spirit of God upon it."

Page 39: "The kingdom of Self is the Fall of Man; or the great apostacy from the Life of God in the soul,

and every one, wherever he be, that lives unto self, is still under the Fall and great apostacy from God. The Kingdom of Christ is the Spirit and Power of God, dwelling and manifesting itself in the birth of a new inward man ; and no one is a member of this kingdom, but so far as a true birth of the Spirit is brought forth in him. These two kingdoms take in all mankind ; he that is not of one, is certainly in the other, dying to one is living to the other."

Page 55 : " Self must be sold and parted with, if the Pearl is to be bought."

Page 59 : " We cannot turn to God, unless we turn from ourselves."

Page 60 : " You must feel yourself as habitually turned from all your own will, selfish ends, and earthly desires, as you are from stealing or murder. Without this, the spiritual life is but spiritual talk, and only assists nature to be pleased with a holiness that it has not."

Page 74 : " So much as you have of pride, so much you have of the fallen Angel alive in you ; so much as you have of true humility, so much you have of the Lamb of God within you."

Page 98 : " The sin of all sins, or the heresy of all heresies, is a worldly spirit." " Choose any life but the life of God and heaven, and you choose death, for death is nothing else but the loss of the life of God."

Page 104 : " A will given up to earthly goods is at grass with Nebuchadnezzar, and has one life with the beasts of the field ; for earthly desires keep up the same life in a man and an ox."

So in the *Spirit of Love* (p. 6). " Everything that

follows our own will, or our own spirit, forsakes the one Will to all goodness, and has no capacity for the Light and Spirit of God."

Page 22: "There is no possibility of man's attaining to any heavenly perfection and happiness, but only in the way the Gospel teaches, by denying and dying to Self."

Page 30: "You see the absolute necessity of the Gospel doctrine of the Cross, viz., of dying to Self, as the one only way to life in God. The Cross, or dying to Self, is the one morality that does man any good."

And in the *Spirit of Prayer* (p. 26). "The Jews crucified their dear Redeemer, and would have none of His salvation because it all consisted in a *new birth* from above, and a kingdom of heaven to be opened within them by the Spirit of God."

And in the *Spirit of Love* (p. 53). "Your own earthly Self is the one murderer of the Divine Life within you. It is your own Cain that murders your own Abel."

From the same (p. 102). "Every man has his own Cain and Abel within himself. In one man his own Abel is murdered by his own Cain, and in another his own Jacob overcomes his own Esau that was born with him; and all the good, and all the evil, that we bring forth in our lives, is nothing else, but from the strife of the two natures within us, and their victory over one another."

How good works should be done (from the same—p. 106).

*Theophilus* to *Eusebius*: "It is much to be feared that you as yet stand only under this outward teaching—your good works are only done under obedience to such



rules, precepts, and doctrines as your reason assents to, but are not the fruit of a new born spirit within you."

Page 107: "Whereas, if the Spirit of Love was really born in you from its own seed, you would account for its birth and power in you in quite another manner than you have here done; you would have known the price that you had paid for it; and how many deaths you had suffered before the Spirit of Love came to life in you."

Page 122: "The way of dying to Self is the way of patience, meekness, humility and resignation to God. How are we to attain this? By simplicity of faith, turning to Christ to work in us."

Page 123: "You must not seek these virtues by a multiplicity of human rules, methods, and contrivances." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

Page 128: On the effect of trouble.—"Nothing brings you so near to Divine relief, as the extremity of distress; for the goodness of God has no other name or nature, but the Helper of all that wants to be helped, and nothing can hinder your finding this goodness of God, and every other gift and grace that you stand in need of, nothing can hinder and delay it, but your turning from the only fountain of life and living water to some cistern of your own making; to this or that method, opinion, division, or subdivision among Christians, carnally expecting some mighty things either from Samaria or Jerusalem, Paul or Apollos, which are only and solely to be had by worshipping the Father in Spirit and in Truth, which is then only done, when your whole heart and spirit trusts solely to the operation of that God within you, in Whom we live, move and have our being."

“ Many persons spend life in a dream ; because they do not know the reality for which life was given. We are given this life that we may rise out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity, and govern all our thoughts and actions with this in view. Heaven is as near to our souls as this world is to our bodies ; God is not a distant God, He is the only good of all intelligent natures ; if we are not at one with Him it is because we are void of the spirit of Prayer.”

We are the offspring of God, and are more nearly related to Him than we are to one another. “ For in Him we live and move and have our being.” To enable us to realize this, we need a new birth, or growth of the heavenly nature within us ; through Jesus Christ. This must not be taken as disparaging our Redeemer’s actual outward life as recorded in the Gospels : “ I assert,” says Law, “ no inward redemption but what wholly proceeds from and is effected by that Life-giving Redeemer, Who died on the cross for our redemption. But a Christ not in us, is the same as a Christ not ours. ‘ Without Me, that is separate from Me, ye can do nothing.’ . . . It is the language of Scripture that Christ in us is our hope of glory ; that Christ formed in us, and raising His own Life and Spirit in us is our only salvation. All our salvation consists in the manifestation of the Nature, Life and Spirit of Jesus Christ, in our inward new man.”

“ Enter, therefore, with all thy heart into this truth, wherever thou goest, whatever thou doest, at home or abroad, in the field, or in the Church, let thine eye be always upon it, do everything in view of it, try everything by the truth of it, love nothing but for the sake

of it. Wherever thou goest, whatever thou doest, do all in the desire of union with Christ, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises and increases the Spirit and Life of Christ in thy soul. For this new birth in Christ thus firmly believed and continually desired, will do everything that thou wantest to have done in thee, it will dry up all the springs of vice, stop all the workings of evil in thy nature, it will bring all that is good into thee, it will open all the Gospel within thee, and thou wilt know what it is to be taught of God. If we fall short of the salvation of Christ it is because we have no will to it."

#### PASSAGES FROM THE "WAY TO DIVINE KNOWLEDGE" ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE FOREGOING

Page 149: "Be assured of this, as a certain truth, that corrupt, fallen, and earthly as human nature is, there is nevertheless in the soul of every man, the Fire and Light, and Love of God, though lodged in a state of hiddenness, inactivity and death, till something or other, human or divine, Moses and the Prophets, Christ or His Apostles, discover its Life within us. For the soul of every man is the Breath and Life of the Triune God, and as such, a partaker of the Divine nature; but all this divinity is unfelt, because overpowered by the workings of flesh and blood, till such time as distress, or grace, or both, give flesh and blood a shock, open the long-shut up eyes, and force a man to find something in himself that sense and reason, whilst at quiet, were not aware of."

Page 179: "Christian Redemption is God's mercy to all mankind; but it could not be so, if every fallen man, as such, had not some fitness or capacity to lay hold of it."

Page 181: "Hence the Apostles were new men, entered into a new Kingdom come down from Heaven, enlightened with new light, inflamed with new love.

Page 182: "The Apostles preached not any absent or distant thing, but Jesus as the *Wisdom* and *Power* of God, felt and found within them, and as a Power of God ready to be communicated in the same manner, as a new birth from above, to all that would repent and believe in Him. It was to this change of nature, of life and spirit, to this certain, immediate deliverance from the power of sin, to be possessed and governed by gifts and graces of a heavenly life, that men were then called to, as true Christianity. And the preachers of it bore witness, not to a thing that they had heard, but to a power of salvation, a renewal of nature, a birth of Heaven, a sanctification of the Spirit, which they themselves had received. Gospel Christianity then stood upon its own true ground; it appeared to be what it was. And what was it? Why, it was an awakened Divine Life set up amongst men; itself was its own proof; it appealed to its proper judge, to the heart and conscience of man, which was alone capable of being touched with these offers of a new Life. Hence it was that sinners of all sorts that felt the burden of their evil natures were in a state of fitness to receive these glad tidings."

Page 190: "Christian Redemption is on the one side

the Heavenly Divine Life offering itself again to the inward man, that had lost it. On the other side it is the hope, the faith, and the desire, of this inward man, hungering and thirsting, and stretching after and calling upon this Divine and Heavenly life."

Page 152: "The Christian dies to the Will of Flesh and Blood, because it is darkness, corruption, and separation from God, he turns from all that is earthly, animal and temporal, and stands in a continual tendency of faith, and hope, and prayer to God, to have a better nature, a better life and spirit born unto him from above."

Page 153: "Death and life are the only things in question; Life is God, living and working in the soul, Death is the soul living and working according to the sense and reason of flesh and blood."

Page 162: "Why was the Son of God made Man? It was because man was to be made again a Divine Creature."

Page 176: "Christ said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you,' as plain as if He said, 'No one else can come to Me, nor any one else be refreshed by Me.' . . . It is only the weary and heavy laden that are fitted to be converts, or refreshed; and therefore we can in no way help a man to be a Christian, or fit him to be refreshed by Christ, but by bringing him into a full sensibility of the evil and burden and vanity of his natural state."

Page 178: "Christianity may be the sure possession of every *plain man* who has sense enough to know whether he is happy or unhappy, good or evil."

Page 194: "Take only the Gospel into your hands ; deny yourself ; renounce the Lusts of the Flesh ; set your affections on things above ; call upon God for His Holy Spirit ; walk by faith and not by sight ; adore the Holy Deity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in Whose image and likeness you were at first created, and in Whose Name and Power you have been baptized, to be again the living likeness and holy habitation of His Life, and Light, and Holy Spirit."

Page 194: "God is a Spirit, in Whom you live and move and have your being. He stays not till you are a great scholar, but till you turn from evil, and love goodness, to manifest His Holy Presence, power and life within you. It is the love of goodness that must do all for you ; this is the art of arts ; and when this is the ruling spirit of your heart, then Father, Son and Holy Spirit will come unto you and make their abode with you, and lead you into all truth."

Page 195: "Books indeed of divinity I have not done with ; but I will esteem none to be such, but those that make known to my heart the inward power and Redemption of Jesus Christ. Nor will I seek anything even from such books, but that which I ask of God in prayer ; viz., how better to know, more to abhor and resist the evil that is in my own nature, and how to attain a supernatural birth of the Divine Life brought forth in me."

Page 206: "Truth, my friend, whatever you may think of it, is no less than the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. Hear, therefore, its own language. ' If any man will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and come after Me.' He does not say,

' Let him get a clear and distinct idea of Me, what and how I am God and Man in the unity of My Person ' ; He only tells him what he is to part with, what he must put off to be made a Child of the Light. Search and look where you will, this denial of Self is the one only possible way to the truth. For nothing has separated us from truth, nothing stands betwixt us and truth, but this Self of our earthly life, which is not from God."

Page 210 : " Nothing leads or carries you anywhere, nothing generates either life or death in you, but the working of your mind, will, and desire. If your will is angelic, you are an Angel, and angelic happiness must be yours. If your will is with God, you work with God ; God is then the life of your soul, and you will have your life with God to all eternity. If you follow an earthly will, every step you take is a departure from God, till you become as incapable of God and the life of God as the animals of this world. If your will worketh in pride, and self-exaltation, in envy, and wrath, in hatred and ill-will, in deceit, hypocrisy and falseness, you work with the devil, you are generating his nature within you and making yourself ready for the kingdom of Hell. And thus it is, that our works follow us, and that everyone will be rewarded according to his works ; and none can reap anything else but that which he has sown ; and the seed of everything that can grow in us is our will."

Page 211 : " The free will of man is a true and real birth from the free, eternal, uncreated will of God, which willed to have a creaturely offspring of itself, or to see itself in a creaturely state."

Page 216: "The one thing that works either to life or to death, the one thing that alone opens heaven or hell for us, is with every individual man in every place, and in every age of the world, and that one thing is the working of the will. And when in any such man, his will is turned from his earthly self, and this earthly life, and worketh with its desire to God, then all these sayings of the Scripture are true of him; viz., that he is redeemed from this evil world—that he has his conversation in heaven—that he is of God, and heareth God's word—that he is saved by faith—that Christ is revealed to him—that he is Christ's and Christ is his—that Christ is in him of a truth—and that he is led by the Spirit of Christ."

Page 217: "As we pray, so we are; and as our will-spirit secretly worketh, so are we either swallowed up in the vanity of time or called forth into the riches of eternity. Therefore, the Spirit of Prayer is most justly conceived, and most simply expressed, when it is said to be the rising of the soul out of the vanity of time into the riches of Eternity."

Page 218: "You see that every soul of man is partly human and partly Divine, and is united to an earthly and a heavenly nature; and so not only can, but must always work either with one or the other, and has nothing else to work with, and must and can be or have nothing else, but as he followeth or worketh with either of these wills."

Page 219: "What a delusion it is therefore to grow grey headed in balancing ancient and modern opinions; to waste the precious uncertain fire of life in critical zeal and verbal animosities, when nothing but the kindling



of our working will into a faith that overcometh the world, into a steadfast hope, and ever-burning love, and desire of the Divine life, can hinder us from falling into eternal death."

Page 220 : " This Christian Life is a birth growing-up in God, till it come to the perfection of the Divine Life, by the same way of a gradual growth, and in the same reality, as the finished flower has all its perfection by way of a gradual growth from the seed."

Page 222 : " This is God's immutable procedure with man, that nothing but his own works can follow Him ; and that from first to last, whether standing or falling according to his faith and working will, so must it be done unto Him."

Page 223 : " A man's faith may be thus understood ; it is that power by which a man gives himself up to anything, seeks, wills, adheres to, and unites with it, so that his life lives in it and belongs to it. Now to whatever the soul gives itself up, whatever it hungereth after, and in which it delights, and seeks to be united ; there, and there only, is its Faith ; that Faith which can work either Life or Death, and according to which Faith, everything is, and must be done to man."

Page 247 : " Look now at worldly greatness, fleshly wisdom, and earthly schemes of happiness ; and tell me if you can what a nothingness, what a folly and delusion, there is in them. Look at the Apostle's Pilgrim, abstaining from worldly lusts, desiring to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified ; living in the spirit of prayer and thirst after God ; striving in everything after the fullest conformity to the Tempers, Spirit, Life, and

Behaviour of Christ in this world ; and then tell me whether heaven and earth, God and Nature, and all that is great and wise and happy, does not call upon you to be this Pilgrim."

## APPENDIX A

### JACOB BÖHME, 1575-1624

(From Article in "Encyclopædia Britannica")

He wrote his first treatise in 1612, but did not publish it. It was copied, unknown to him, and circulated. Subsequent writings were not published till 1624, when he put forth a devotional treatise, *Der Weg zu Christo*.

Inward revelation to his soul he regarded as the chief source of his power; but in his writings we trace the influence of Theophrastus von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus (1493-1541), of Kaspar Schwenkfeld, the first Protestant mystic (1490-1561), and of Valentine Weigel (1533-1588). From the school of Paracelsus came much of his puzzling phraseology. The author of this article says, "There is danger lest his crude science and his crude philosophical vocabulary conceal the fertility of Böhme's ideas, and the transcendent greatness of his religious insight." In his view the ultimate object of the creation of the world was to show forth the eternal victory of good over evil, of love over wrath.

In the time of the Commonwealth of England there were both in England and Holland societies of Behmenists. They merged into the Quaker movement, holding already in common with Friends that salvation is nothing short of the very presence and life of Christ

in the believer, and only kept apart by an objective doctrine of the Sacraments, which exposed the latter to the polemic of Quakers.

Germany has turned to Böhme with eyes directly philosophical. "He is known," says Hegel, "as the *Philosophus Teutonicus*, and in reality through him for the first time did philosophy in Germany come forward with a characteristic stamp. The kernel of his philosophy is purely German." *Gesch. Ph.* iii. 1836, p. 300.

## APPENDIX B

### CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT TAULER FOUNDED ON DR. SCHMIDT'S "LIFE OF TAULER"

The root of sin lay in turning away from God, and towards what is earthly. The root of sin is independence of God. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Man's true nobility lies in recognising that he is meant to be dependent on God. He is to give up his self-life to God, and recognise that he is nothing, that he is a nonentity apart from God. Sin lies in man forgetting this nothingness, and wanting to be something on his own account. While he separates himself from God, forgetting the conditions of his creaturely existence, he can therefore effect nothing. All that man has and is belongs to God; all that is good in his works belongs to God; and if man desires while taking up a position of independence of God to effect his own improvement and sanctification he only spoils the work that God might do in him.

Tauler denies that man in his fallen state is utterly corrupt—not accepting the Augustinian doctrine on this point, nor does he enter into the scholastic distinctions as to how the grace of God comes to man, a difficulty which can never be really solved on earth; it is enough

for him to declare that man can do nothing for himself, but he can be willing and anxious to receive grace.

Salvation, with Tauler, is return to God through actual following of Christ, by accepting His teaching, and following in His steps. Recognition of the truth is not attained by mere acceptance of the teaching ; it dawns upon us in its fulness and reality only by living it out, as step by step we conform our lives to the life of Christ. By conformity to the life of Christ we attain union with God, the ultimate aim of the returning soul.

The true blessedness of man lies in knowing and loving God ; to attain this Tauler would have us renounce all creaturely attachment. On this point his language and that of Thomas à Kempis is strong, and doubtless influenced by the conceptions of their day. For this we ought to make allowance, for Tauler himself, we know, sent for his sister, an aged nun, to comfort him on his own deathbed, and the memorials of his order written by à Kempis exhibit a beautiful tenderness and affection. Our Lord's own words set forth, in language which may easily be misunderstood, the supreme claims of the divine call on the soul, yet no one ever showed a tenderer regard than Our Lord for human ties, for "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

It is not love of other human beings, if we but love them in Christ, but lower and self-loving earthly attachments that in their inner teaching would be condemned by Tauler and à Kempis ; but if they go beyond this, so far they are in error. It was a monastic exaggeration. But we can agree with Tauler when (Christmas Day) he quotes the words of Dionysius, "to be converted to the

truth means nothing else but a turning from the love of created things, and a coming into union with the uncreated Highest Good."

From these views it is not surprising that Tauler should have adopted the opinion so common in the middle ages, and from which the monks so often fell away, that not only poverty of spirit, but actual outward poverty was helpful towards the receiving of the presence of God into the soul. In this, too, Tauler, and others like him, saw the opportunity of literal conformity to the life of Christ. All might not be called to this, but it was in his view helpful even if not necessary to perfection. (Schmidt, p. 140).

To Tauler's classification of the virtues we need not refer. The foundation of his moral teaching is the unity of goodness; the various virtues are only the different expressions of the one, indivisible, essential virtue, Love. As God is Love—so Love is above all else. Among men Love is nothing else but an entire denial of self, that gives itself away for the loved one, so that Love is a fire which burns up all that is selfish and personal and imperfect in man. Love is, therefore, a means towards union with God, and the surest sign that such union has been attained.

If you are occupied in devotional exercise, and God wills you should rise up, and preach His Word, or render service to a sick person, you must not refuse the call; for in outward works you do more good, than by much contemplation; but if you omit the outward work, the inward becomes to you a sin.

One who has chosen poverty is, indeed, raised above the necessity of working for himself; but he must not

cease to exert himself for the benefit, comfort, improvement, and support of his neighbour ; and as his neighbours, he is not only to reckon his friends, fellow citizens, and people who have the same views and habits as he has, but all men without exception, even his foes ; the highest love lies just in this, in giving more happiness to his neighbour, be he friend or foe, than he takes for himself.



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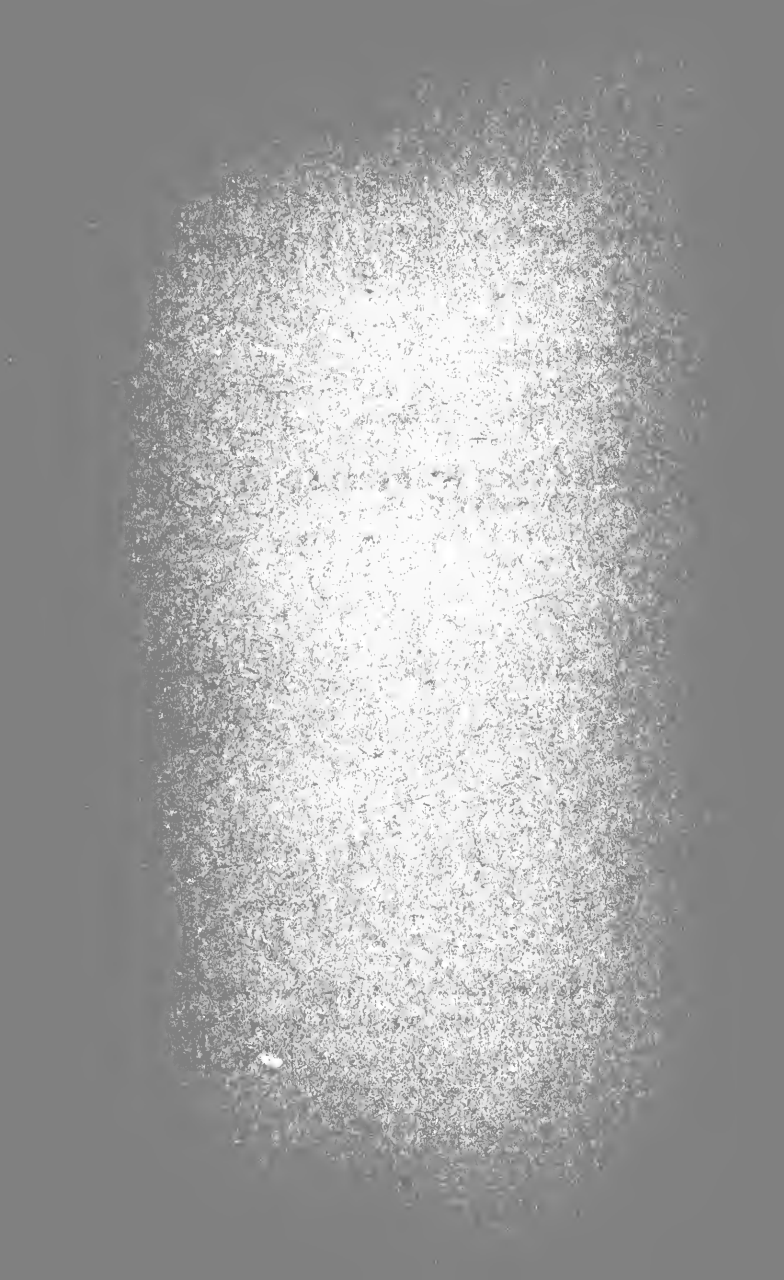
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